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Commission on the Status of Women

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Item 3 (c) (ii) of the provisional agenda*

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled

“Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”: implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: women’s human rights and elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls as defined in the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”

Statement submitted by International Alliance of Women, International Council of Women, International Federation of Business and Professional Women, Soroptimist International, and Zonta International, non-governmental organizations in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council; Associated Country Women of the World, Centre for Women, the Earth, the Divine, Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children, International Council of Jewish Women, International Council of Women, International Federation for Home Economics, National Council of German Women’s Organizations, Pax Romana, School Sisters of Notre Dame, Socialist International Women, the Salvation Army and Women’s International Zionist Organization, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council; and European Union of Women, a non-governmental organization on the Roster

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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* E/CN.6/2003/1.



Women's human rights and the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls, as defined in the Beijing Platform for Action

We, the undersigned international and national non-governmental organizations in consultative status with ECOSOC, members of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Status of Women, present to the 47th session of CSW the following statement for information and consideration.

We commend the World Health Organization for having drawn up the World Report on Violence and Health. This first comprehensive review of the problem of violence presents data and other information on violence as a global public health problem. By publishing this report WHO also supports and underpins the work and findings of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women.

Women all over the world are still targets of male violence, such as domestic violence, honour killings, dowry deaths and other cruel forms of torturing or killing women. Women's human rights are ignored, denied them, and violated. Women are suppressed, threatened and blackmailed into submission. Women are mistreated, sexually abused, exploited, and often raped while in custody by law enforcement personnel. Women are systematically raped in armed conflict and war. Female genital mutilation is still practised in many countries, seriously affecting the lives and health of 90 million women and girls.

Women in some parts of the world are cruelly punished and even executed for allegedly conducting extramarital relationships or for having illegitimate children — often the result of rape or gang rape.

Women in many countries are still denied the right to education — they constitute two thirds of all illiterates. Girls are not offered basic skills, let alone given the educational tools to become economically independent. Illiterate women are unable to make their full contribution to the political, social and economic life of their countries.

We therefore urge Member States

- to agree that a secretariat be established with sufficient financial and human resources to support the most needed and valuable work of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women;
- to consider elaborating and adopting a Convention on the elimination of violence against women;
- to protect women fleeing their countries to avoid punishment or to save their own lives and that of their unborn child and not to repatriate them against their own will;
- to agree that systematic rape be considered a war crime and perpetrators be prosecuted by the International Criminal Court established by the United Nations;
- to introduce legislation which will severely punish members of law enforcement agencies when they violate women's physical integrity or women's human rights while in custody;
- to make rape a criminal offence where it is still considered a misdemeanour;

- to ensure that legal and organizational provisions are made to guarantee the full integration of girls into the educational system and institutions, from the basic level to higher education and vocational training;
 - to assist efforts in Afghanistan to bring women back into the education system and to ensure that their rights to participation in public life be respected and realized.
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